

BOATING LAWS

WHAT IS A VESSEL?

By law a vessel is every description of a watercraft or structure other than a seaplane, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation or habitation on the water.

WHAT IS A MOTORBOAT?

A motorboat for the purpose of this brochure is any boat with an internal combustion motor more than 10 horsepower that does not classify as a Personal Watercraft (PWC). A sailboat is a motorboat while it is using its motor for propulsion but is a sailboat when not under power of a motor.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL WATERCRAFT?

A personal watercraft (PWC) is a small vessel which uses an outboard or propeller-driven motor, or an inboard motor powering a water jet pump, as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on, or being towed behind the vessel, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel. Manufacturer brand names include Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, and Wave Runners.

Equipment

Every vessel operating on the waters of this state shall have the required equipment, as listed in the "Required Equipment" chart included in this brochure, according to class as well as the following:

- A certificate of numbers on board and in full force and effect.
- Registration numbers displayed on both sides of the vessel, on the front portion of the bow, in three-inch solid block letters of contrasting color to the hull with the validation sticker following the registration on the starboard (right) side and spaced as follows:
NC 1234 AB or NC-1234-AB.
- The proper type and size personal flotation device (PFD) for each person onboard in good condition and readily accessible.
- **All children under the age of 13 aboard a vessel that is underway, must wear an approved PFD, unless below deck or in an enclosed cabin.**

WHO CAN OPERATE A MOTORBOAT OR A PWC?

- No person under 12 years of age can operate a PWC on the waters of this state. A person under the age of 12 may operate a motorboat only under the direct supervision of an adult who can immediately take control of the boat.
- A person of at least 12 years of age but less than 16 years of age can operate a motorboat or a PWC **IF**:
 1. The person is accompanied by a person of at least 18 years of age who physically occupies the vessel; **OR**
 2. The person possesses on his or her person while operating the vessel, photo identification showing proof of age and a boater safety certification card issued by the Wildlife Resources Commission or proof

of other satisfactory completion of a boating safety education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA); and produces the identification and certification card upon request of an officer of the Wildlife Resources Commission or local law enforcement agency. This does **NOT** include internet courses.

- Any person 16 years of age or older is not required to have a boating safety course to operate a motorboat or a PWC.
- It is unlawful for the owner of a motorboat or PWC, or a person who has temporary or permanent responsibility for a person under the age of 16 to knowingly allow that person to operate a motorboat or PWC.

Operation

- Every vessel operating between the hours of sunset and sunrise shall burn bow and/or stern lights as required by law.
- No person shall operate any motorboat or vessel while underway on the waters of this state:
 1. While under the influence of an impairing substance; **OR**
 2. After consumed sufficient alcohol with a concentration of .08 or more.
- No person shall operate a vessel at greater than no wake speed within 50 yards (150 feet) of any boat launching area, dock, pier, marina, boat storage structure on the waters of **Lake Norman**.
- No person shall operate a vessel at greater than no wake speed while within a marked mooring area established in North Carolina.

OPERATION OF A PWC

- No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state at any time between sunset and sunrise.
- No person shall operate a PWC on the waters of this state, nor shall the owner of a PWC knowingly allow another person to operate that PWC on the waters of this state, **UNLESS**:
 - Each person riding on or being towed behind such vessel is wearing a type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (PFD) approved by the US Coast Guard. Inflatable PFD's do not satisfy this requirement.
 - If the PWC is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cut off switch, the lanyard must be securely attached to the person, clothing, or PFD of the operator at all times while the PWC is being operated in such a manner to turn off the engine if the operator dismounts while the watercraft is in operation.
 - The total number of persons operating, observing, and being towed does not exceed the number of passengers identified by the manufacturer as the maximum safe load for the vessel.

- PWC's must at all times be operated in a reasonable and prudent manner. Maneuvers that endanger life, limb, or property shall constitute reckless operation of a vessel. These maneuvers include:
 - Unreasonably or unnecessarily weaving through congested vessel traffic;
 - Jumping the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of such vessel or when visibility around such vessel is obstructed;
 - Intentionally approaching another vessel in order to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid collision;
 - Operating contrary to the "rules of the road" or following too closely to another vessel, including another PWC. "Following too closely" means proceeding in the same direction and operating at a speed in excess of 10 miles per hour when approaching within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another vessel that is underway unless that vessel is operating in a narrow channel, in which case a PWC may operate at the speed and flow of other vessel traffic. A narrow channel is defined as a segment of the waters of the State that is 300 feet or less in width.
- No person shall operate a personal watercraft on the waters of this State at greater than no-wake speed within 100 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, a dock, pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged in angling, or any manually operated propelled vessel, unless the personal watercraft is operating in a narrow channel. No person shall operate a personal watercraft in a narrow channel at greater than no-wake speed within 50 feet of an anchored or moored vessel, a dock, Pier, swim float, marked swimming area, swimmers, surfers, persons engaged in angling, or any manually operated propelled vessel.

Water Skiing and Towed Accessories

- No person shall operate any **vessel**; manipulate water skis, surfboard, or similar device on the waters of this state in a reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger life, limb, or property.
- No person shall operate a vessel on the waters of this state towing a person(s) on water skis, surfboard, or similar device between one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.
- No person shall operate a vessel towing any person(s) on water skis, surfboard, or similar device unless there is **in** such a vessel a person, in **addition** to the operator, in a position to observe the person(s) being towed, unless the vessel is equipped with a suitable marine type rear view mirror.
- Every person being towed for recreation must have on an approved Personal Flotation Device suitable for that type activity or a suit designed for that type of activity either of which is able to withstand an impact of 50 miles per hour.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Class "A" - Less than 16 feet

1. Red to port, green to starboard, 360 degree white all around light, or 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.
2. Wearable PFD for each person on board (Type I, II or III may be onboard or Type V if worn).
3. Fire extinguisher for closed construction (B-1).
4. Sailboats less than 23 feet under sail alone, boats being rowed or motorboats of 10 horsepower or less may carry an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light to be displayed in sufficient time to prevent collision.

Class "I" - 16 feet to less than 26 feet

1. Red to port, green to starboard, 360 degree white all around light, or 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.
2. Wearable PFD for each person on board (Type I, II, or III may be onboard or Type V if worn).
3. Throwable cushion or ring buoy (Type IV PFD).
4. Whistle or sound producing device.
5. Fire extinguisher (one B-1 closed construction).
6. Flame arrestor for IB or IO's.
7. Ventilation system.

Class "II" - 26 feet to less than 40 feet

1. Red to port, green to starboard, 360 degree white all around light, or 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.
2. Wearable PFD for each person on board (Type I, II, or III may be onboard or Type V if worn).
3. Throwable cushion or ring buoy (Type IV PFD).
4. Whistle or sound producing device and Bell if 12 meters.
5. Fire extinguisher (one B-2 or Two B-1's).
6. Flame arrestor for IB or IO's.
7. Ventilation system.

Class "III" - 40 feet and longer

1. Red to port, green to starboard. 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.
2. Wearable PFD for each person on board (Type I, II, or III may be onboard or Type V if worn).
3. Throwable cushion or ring buoy (Type IV PFD).
4. Whistle or sound producing device and Bell.
5. Fire extinguisher (three B-1's, one B-1 and two B-2's, a built in system plus two B-1's or one B-2).
6. Flame arrestor for IB or IO's.
7. Ventilation system.

FINES AND PENALTIES

All of the regulations listed in this brochure are either Class 2 or Class 3 Misdemeanors for which you may be arrested. Charges of Boating While Impaired (BWI) and Reckless Operation are mandatory court appearances where the judge will set the fine up to \$1000; all others have a \$25 fine. All charges also include cost of court.

What To Do in Case Of A Boating Accident

Any operator of a vessel involved in a collision or accident shall render assistance to affected persons as long as he/she can without endangering his own vessel, crew or passengers. All boating accidents or collisions which result in death, personal injury or property damage of more than \$500 must be reported to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (800) 662-7137

How to Obtain Help On The Water

Call 911 on your cell phone or use your VHF-FM Radio to request help on Channel 16
For towing or gas delivery call a marine tow service:
TowBOAT/US 1- (800) 391-4869
Sea Tow 1- (888) 988-0060
On **LAKE NORMAN**:
Lake Tow, a TowBOAT/US affiliate (704) 483-0112
Sea Tow (828) 320-1301

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES

The Catawba County Sheriff's Office would like to encourage boaters of all ages to take a NASBLA approved boating safety education class as mentioned above. The classes are mandatory to operate any motorboat or PWC on Lake Norman if you are under the age of 16. The classes are offered in this area by:
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (919) 733-7192
U.S. Coastguard Auxiliary (704) 663-3333
U.S. Power Squadron (704) 895-4994
Lighthouse Marine Service, Inc. (704) 587-7054

Lake Patrol agencies on Lake Norman

Catawba County Sheriff's Office (828) 464-3112
Charlotte Mech. Police Dept. (704) 336-2340
Iredell County Sheriff's Office (704) 878-3100
Lincoln County Sheriff's Office (704) 735-8202
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (919) 733-7192

The Catawba County Sheriff's Office would like to thank Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and Officer Randy Echerd of Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department's Lake Enforcement Unit for the development of this pamphlet.

www.catawbacountync.gov

CCSO 01/04

Boating Rules and Regulations on Lake Norman

Office of the Sheriff Catawba County



Lake Patrol Unit

Sheriff L. David Huffman